

APPLICANT FEEDBACK SUMMARY

2013 AmeriCorps State and National Grant Competition

Legal Applicant: Lutheran Family Services of Nebraska

Application ID: 13AC145326

Program Name: Nebraska Economic Opportunity Corps

For the purpose of enhancing our programs by improving the quality and quantity of applications to the Corporation for National and Community Service (CNCS), we are providing specific feedback regarding the strengths and weaknesses of this application. These comments are not meant to represent a comprehensive assessment; rather the analysis represents those elements that had the greatest bearing on the rating of the application. Please note that this feedback consists of summary comments from more than one reviewer. For this reason, some of the comments may seem to be inconsistent or contradictory. Comments are not representative of all of the information used in the final funding decision.

Reviewers' Summary Comments:

(+) The applicant identifies factors contributing to the economic opportunity problems faced by each targeted population (low-income, at-risk youth; veterans, active military and their families; and refugees, immigrants and secondary immigrants). Among the identified factors are: teen parenthood, barriers related to completing high school and job readiness, Post Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD), homelessness, language, transportation, access to services, isolation, and cultural differences.

(+) The applicant presents persuasive evidence of the identified need in targeted communities in Nebraska. Presenting data from a variety of sources to include relevant, current studies, research results, and reports to support their position, the applicant clearly describes the need to make available economic opportunity through case management, job-readiness training, and service agency connections for economically disadvantaged military, at-risk youth, and refugees.

(+) The applicant demonstrates the severity of the need within the target area. For instance, Omaha has the 11th highest African-American poverty rate among the nations' 100 largest metropolitan areas. The county was above the state average in unemployment and poverty and high school dropouts. Seventy-percent of African-Americans graduate from high school, 20% below the 90% rate for Caucasian students and 16% below the rate for all students. More so, according to a 2012 RAND Corporation report for Omaha 320,000 veterans will return with PTSD, Traumatic Brain Injury (TBI) or both. Further, the Omaha Refugee Task Force and the City of Omaha identified key issues facing refugees: employment, education, housing issues, public safety, legal issues, and mental health issues.

(+) The applicant describes how Members will be involved through partner organizations to deliver a myriad of services specifically tailored to each target population. One service that all populations will receive is targeted pre-employment case management. Other case management offerings such as: job skills development, housing assistance, ESL services, and PTSD management help will be specific to individual target populations.

(+) The applicant is requesting 20 Members to fill full-time slots; 17 Members to fill half-time slots and two Members to fill quarter-time slots. This differentiation in the types of Members requested is purposeful to best meet

the needs of the partner organization/target community.

(+) The applicant clearly describes the roles and responsibilities of AmeriCorps members who will provide individualized case management services to military, at-risk youth, and refugees in low-income communities at a number of host site locations throughout Nebraska. Services will be provided through three distinct program models to include: The Omaha Center for Healthy Families to serve low-income at-risk youth; the At Ease program to serve veterans, active military and their families; and the International Center of the Heartland which will serve refugees, immigrants, and secondary immigrants.

(+) The applicant clearly describes their intent to provide coordinated, targeted case management at a level not possible for existing staff and volunteers to maintain and to expand current service delivery to include crisis intervention and to address mental health issues.

(+) The applicant utilizes an evidence-informed procedure that has been implemented for 12 years with a measureable positive impact in the state.

(+) The applicant outlines a clear process to measure the intended impact by the number of clients served, the number of clients who complete trainings or attend therapy, the number of clients who obtain employment, and the number of clients who report an improved quality of life. The applicant intends to collect the data through its client database, client surveys, client self-report, and a specialized employability assessment called the Client Goal Attainment Scale (CGAS).

(-) The applicant presents limited data to substantiate the extent/severity of the needs of each of the target groups or their strategy for determining the provision of services to each target population in specific cities. For example, they do not provide substantive data from other areas in the state nor provide data to support their intent to provide services in one community and not the other.

(-) The applicant requests 29 MSY; 20 full-time slots, 17 half-time slots, and two quarter-time slots, but does not explain how the different slots align with program design and activities, only that the variety provides flexibility to meet the demand of community and service beneficiaries.

(-) The applicant maintains the demonstrable impact on the community will be that 1,200 clients will receive connectivity to services; the impact to the community that should result from increased employability and improved quality-of-life from clients' engagement in those services is not discussed.